

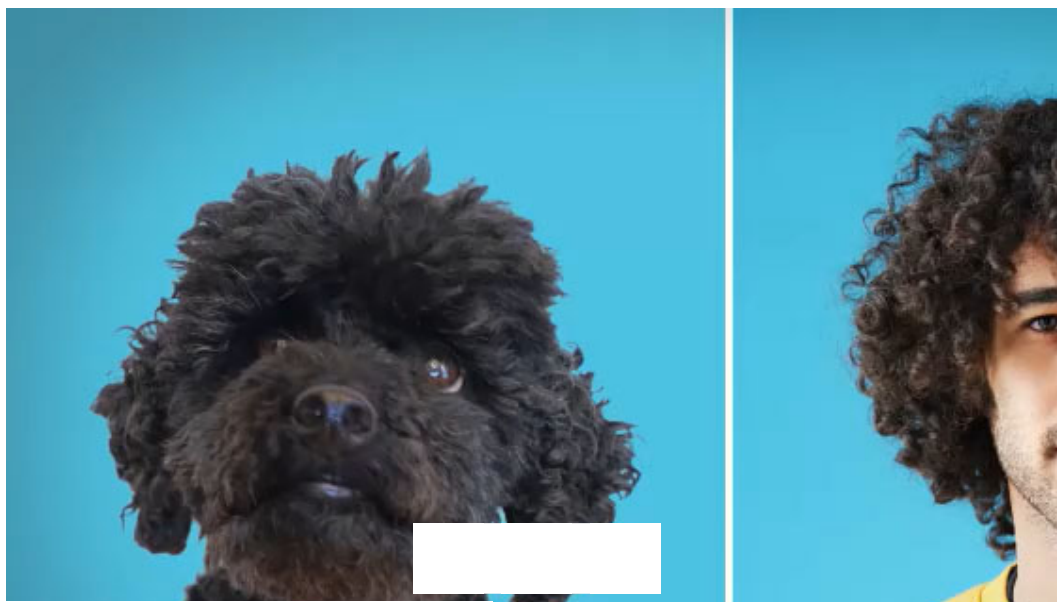
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CBS MORNINGS EXCLUSIVE

## RFK Jr. says he's "not familiar" with all health program cuts in exclusive interview



By Kelsie Hoffman, Sara Kuzmarov, Michael Sugerman  
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In his first network TV interview since becoming Health and Human Services secretary under the Trump administration, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. spoke with CBS News chief medical correspondent Dr. Jon LaPook about the measles vaccine, major government cuts and health care costs.

LaPook met with Kennedy in Mesa, Arizona, where he visited a native health center as part of a three-state tour to promote the Trump administration's "Make America Healthy Again" agenda, which includes overhauling standards for food processing.

"FDA needs to start regulating food again and saying, you know, not just when food is adulterated, when there's bacteria in it, let's look at the chemicals in it," Kennedy said.

### Cuts to health programs and staff

Since his appointment in February, Kennedy of programs and employees.

When asked by LaPook if he personally approved the more than \$11 billion proposed in cuts to local and state programs that address infectious disease, mental health, addiction and childhood vaccination, Kennedy said, "No I'm not familiar with those cuts. We'd have to go ... the cuts were mainly DEI cuts, which the president ordered."

LaPook provided Kennedy with an example of a \$750,000 University of Michigan grant focused on adolescent diabetes, which was eliminated.

"I didn't know that, and that's something that we'll look at," Kennedy said. He added that he could not speak to if it should be considered a DOGE cut.

"I just, I'm not familiar with that particular study. But there's a number of studies that were cut that came to our attention and that did not deserve to be cut, and we reinstated them. Our purpose is not to reduce any level of scientific research that's important."

Around 10,000 HHS employees are being laid off in a restructuring move by Kennedy and Elon Musk's DOGE. The secretary acknowledged that some of the DOGE cuts will need to be reinstated.

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"HHS's job is to make America healthy, and we're spending \$1.9 trillion a year, and people are not getting healthy. ... What Elon said is that, when you do a disruption of this, a lot of times, 80% of the people that get cut ... You may make mistakes, as much as 20[%], and then you go back and remedy that."

With billions of dollars in cuts at stake, Kennedy addressed the cost of health care.

"People have a choice about how sick they are going to be, many people. If you don't have any choice, then we should give you all the resources that you want, but I mean ... it's a moral question too, and it's a philosophical question," the secretary said. ' ' expect society to pay when you get sick?"

## Measles vaccine

For decades, Kennedy has been a vaccine skeptic and promoted false claims that vaccines cause autism. But now, Kennedy told CBS News he encourages people to get the measles vaccine.

"The federal government's position, my position, is that people should get the measles vaccine, but ... the government should not be mandating those," he said.

Kennedy had previously said the measles vaccine is the most effective way to prevent the virus from spreading, but until now had stopped short of recommending it.

Yet he also continued to raise doubts, despite decades of research and extensive testing that backs up the effectiveness and safety of vaccines.

"When I say they're not safety tested, what I mean is they're not adequately – many of the vaccines are tested for only three or four days with no placebo group," Kennedy said. "I always said during my campaign and every part, every public statement I've made: I'm not gonna take people's vaccines away from them. What I'm gonna do is make sure that we have good science so that people can make an informed choice."

The growing multi-state measles outbreak has hit Texas the hardest. As of Tuesday, the state reported more than 500 confirmed measles cases since January and two deaths in unvaccinated children, ages 6 and 8.

Following the death of the second child from measles-related causes, Kennedy traveled to Gaines County, Texas, posting on X that he was there "to comfort the Hildebrand family after the loss of their 8-year-old daughter Daisy."

As of April 3, the CDC has reported 607 confirmed measles cases in more than 20 states, including Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont and Washington.

The outbreak centered in West Texas has primarily impacted children and teens, most of whom were unvaccinated or have an unknown vaccination status.

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